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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Col. Qaddafi and The Post (Cont'd.)

I was disappointed to read the negative reactions [letters, Nov. 8] to The Post's decision to publish details of the CIA's plan to overthrow Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi ["CIA Anti-Qaddafi Plan Backed," Nov. 3].

The critics' argument, including that of a "none-too-subtle Democrat," is that Bob Woodward's story undermines the CIA's plot to depose a leading figure in state-supported terrorist operations.

Are these critics forgetting that it is illegal for the United States to assassinate or promote the assassination of the leader of a sovereign country? Do they think the United States can just start targeting people, without regard for U.S. or international law?

Even if the U.S. operation were legal (I think most Americans, including myself, at least sympathize with the CIA's aim), I see no historical evidence to uphold the contention that The Post's disclosure of the plan undermines its execution. It didn't seem to bother the CIA when the House and Senate openly debated its role with the contras who are trying to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. And I seriously doubt that CIA officials are spending late nights rewriting the blueprints for toppling Qaddafi.

Considering, too, that the CIA, according to The Post, is supporting a weak and illegitimate Libyan opposition force, I highly commend The Post for forewarning the American people of another U.S. foreign policy fiasco looming in the near future.

SARAH E. ALEXANDER
Washington

The letters to the editor protesting The Post's publication of U.S. plans to undermine Qaddafi were remarkable for ignoring the many valid reasons for publishing the story.

The most important reason is that our system requires an informed citizenry to work. There are many cases in recent history where the American public was kept in the dark to the detriment

of the nation's (people's) interests. One such example is Iran.

Instead of being informed of the Iranian general strike and the slaughter of 10,000 Iranians in 1978, the American public was led to believe that the shah's U.S.-sponsored government had widespread popular support and was being undermined by the Soviets. Instead of being in an informed position to lobby our representatives for a change in policy, we went our merry ways while our government sent weapons, "advisers" and riot control equipment to the shah to use against Iranians with whom the Shah's "kleptocracy" was anything but popular.

The consequences of this ignorance include Ayatollah Khomeini, the hostages and a United States perceived as "the Great Satan" by millions of people. After the fact, it was revealed that some U.S. leaders (notably Sens. Frank Church and Hubert Humphrey) had predicted the shah's fall as early as 1961. In the aftermath of the fiasco, Americans died, and the nation was humiliated in the eyes of the world.

Letter writer George Packard asserted "we can assume" there are no journalists in the Soviet Union or Libya informing their citizens, as Bob Woodward's article did. Perhaps not. But if the objective is to imitate Libya and the Soviet Union, what's the Cold War about?

Vietnam is another example of the cost of public ignorance. Approximately 60,000 Americans and several hundred billion dollars are gone forever because we reacted to what was described to the American public as two "unprovoked" attacks on the high seas. Of course we now know that the second attack never happened, and the first was most certainly provoked.

If our perceived enemies use covert operations to destabilize the world and we have knowledge of it, why not expose it?

In the meantime, Bob Woodward and The Post should be praised for bringing the truth to their readers because we most certainly live in a world governed

by the natural law of "truth or consequences."

JAMES R. GRANGER JR.
Columbia

Those who have criticized The Post's story on the CIA's latest plan would have us believe that Col. Qaddafi was unaware, until informed by The Post, that the CIA was out to get him. Come, now. Col. Qaddafi, although born in Libya, was not born yesterday.

The crux of The Post's story was that members of the House and Senate select committees on intelligence fear that President Reagan's executive order prohibiting the CIA from direct or indirect involvement in assassinations is being subverted by the CIA. This is a question of public policy and is, therefore, a matter of legitimate interest to the American people. It means either that the president does not know what is going on or that he does know and is deceiving the public about the validity of his own executive order.

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